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**CITY COUNCIL APPROVES MEASURE TO PROTECT RESIDENTS
FROM DISCRIMINATION AND ENSURE GENDER EQUALITY**

Under Ordinance, Public Places Cannot Deny Access to Facilities on the Basis of Gender Identity

The City Council today approved measures to protect residents in accessing facilities on the basis of gender identify, aligning City measures with new guidelines which have been recently enacted by Chicago Public Schools (CPS). These gender equality measures were introduced at last month's City Council meeting by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and members of the LGBT caucus, and will strengthen existing protections for residents under the city's Human Rights Ordinance.

"The City of Chicago celebrates diversity and has a long and proud history of being a welcoming place for LGBT residents," said Mayor Emanuel. "Chicago stands in solidarity with the LGBT community here and across the country, and today's action will ensure that we are a place of inclusion and tolerance that allows people from all groups—no matter their gender or who they love—to participate free of discrimination."

The gender equality amendment to Chicago's Human Rights Ordinance will prohibit public accommodations like hotels, restaurants or grocery stores from requiring patrons to show a government issued ID upon request to access facilities that are private in nature —such as restrooms—based on a person's biological category, his or her gender identity, or both.

"Today's reforms will ensure that the Human Rights Ordinance's public accommodation protections of equal access will apply equally to all people as they are intended to," said Mona Noriega, Chair and Commissioner of the Commission on Human Relations. "As the agency that enforces the ordinance, we applaud the Mayor and Aldermen for taking corrective action that will secure gender equality and prohibit discrimination throughout the city of Chicago."

These updates to the city's Human Rights Ordinance were informed by collaboration between the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR) and community groups to ensure that the City of Chicago's Human Rights Ordinance is inclusive of the LGBTQ community and offer public accommodation protections to all equally. Today's action will address heightened awareness of issues affecting the transgender community, and will strengthen existing protections in order to prohibit discrimination for all residents and visitors.

“I’m pleased that Chicago is taking the moral and responsible approach in an effort to protect all of our residents from discrimination,” said Alderman Pat Dowell. “We are a city built on diversity, and in updating our Human Rights Ordinance to protect transgender individuals, we maintain our reputation for tolerance and inclusion by ensuring that everyone living in or visiting Chicago is safe from discrimination.”

“We commend the Mayor and City Council for their action today to update the Chicago Human Rights Ordinance,” said Kim L. Hunt, executive director at Pride Action Tank. “And, we thank the many LGBTQ people and allies who also stepped up to ensure that transgender and gender nonconforming people in this city can go about their days with dignity and respect. After all, this much need policy change has always been bigger than bathrooms.”

“Discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated in Chicago,” said Alderman Tom Tunney. “Today’s action by the City Council reaffirms that Chicago welcomes all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or their gender identity.”

CPS created similar guidelines last month to protect the rights of its students, teachers and staff. The district’s new guidelines are reflective of a more recent understanding for the needs and experiences of the transgender community, as well as the city’s larger commitment to inclusion. CPS worked closely with prominent advocacy groups—including the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, Mikva Challenge, Lambda Legal and Lurie Children’s Gender and Sex Development Program—to inform and create their newly implemented guidelines. The guidelines have since been lauded by LGBT and advocacy groups for the comprehensive protection provided to the transgender community and other groups that have faced discrimination.

“With today’s action, transgender people will no longer be subjected to ridiculous restrictions on bathroom usage,” said James Cappleman. “Our measure ensures that Chicago is a haven for everyone, and protects the transgender and LGBT communities from discriminatory practices like those wrongly embraced elsewhere.”

Today’s action by the City Council is the latest in a series of reforms by the Mayor to combat discrimination and protect the rights of LGBT and transgender individuals. In April 2016, in response to a new North Carolina law that prohibits local governments from passing laws to protect members of the LGBT community, Mayor Emanuel directed City department heads to cease any City-funded or other travel by an employee representing the City of Chicago to the State of North Carolina. Departments shall not authorize any employee travel that is not absolutely necessary for the enforcement of Chicago law, meets prior contractual obligations, or is for the protection of public health, welfare and safety.

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